

December 16, 2008

MOTION BY ZOO COMMISSIONER KIMBERLY MARTEAU  
FOR RESOLUTION BY LOS ANGELES ZOO COMMISSION  
REGARDING PACHYDERM FOREST AND CARDENAS PROPOSALS

In 2006, in response to criticism by animal activist groups, the Zoo proposed expanding the size of the *Pachyderm Forest* project from two acres to six acres, making it larger than the field at Dodger Stadium. The Zoo Commission held extensive hearings related to the issue. Experts on both sides provided hours of testimony about the pros and cons of having elephants in zoos, including intensive focus on their physical and mental health, as well as the size of any enclosure. It was shown that elephants in American zoos, governed by American Zoological Association standards, are extremely healthy and have lifespans that mirror those in the wild.\* It was also shown that the L.A. Zoo's proposed Pachyderm Forest would be a state-of-the-art facility, well above AZA requirements, and that the L.A. Zoo has highly-trained, expert keepers and veterinarians to care for its elephants. As a result, the City Council endorsed the expansion by a vote of 13—2 and provided \$14.48 million of necessary additional funds through MICLA. So a \$27.5 million project became a \$42 million project.

To summarize, the Zoo responded to the critics, going to great lengths to expand its proposed exhibit, and at \$14.48 million in additional cost. The L.A. City Council wholeheartedly agreed.

Since then, no new information has come to light to change the testimony or conclusions of those 2006 hearings with respect to the welfare of elephants in American zoos, and in particular, in the L.A. Zoo.

Therefore, Billy's and any future L.A. Zoo elephants' welfare is and should be no longer an issue with respect to the proposed facility and level of care here at the L.A. Zoo. We know that such welfare will be under constant surveillance by animal activists, but at this moment, there is no evidence that either the facility or the care is or will be anything but superlative.

However conclusive the above issue is, vocal opponents of the Pachyderm Forest have found a wedge issue in these difficult economic times – those same MICLA funds that were voted 13-2 by the City Council two years ago to expand the acreage in respond to those same critics.

One-third, or \$12 million, of the \$42 million has already been spent on this extraordinary elephant home. For some members of the City Council, it is the costs of construction of a \$42 million exhibit, all of which is funded— except for \$14.48 million—by voter-approved bond measures and private fundraising, that is difficult to swallow in a troubling economic environment. While MICLA funds can only be spent for capital projects or equipment, it is

the debt service of \$1.2 million annually for twenty years that would come from scarce general funds that is the sticking point.

In order to take this issue off of the table for the City Council, the Trustees of the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA), the Zoo's partner organization, has stepped forward and proposed to undertake the annual debt service of \$1.2 million on the MICLA funds. Having raised over \$27 million in private funds over the past few years, there is no doubt that GLAZA is fully capable of fulfilling this commitment.

Finally, the potential loss of the Asian elephant program at the Los Angeles Zoo is unthinkable. In the midst of the clamor over elephants, someone needs to speak for the children of Los Angeles who are awed by Billy's majesty, the parents who strive to enrich their children's lives by giving them a wildlife experience they can afford, and the 1.6 million visitors who represent the true cross-section of Los Angeles residents. The Los Angeles Zoo Commission is one of those voices.

It is therefore moved that the Los Angeles Zoo Commission pass a resolution reaffirming its support of the L.A. Zoo's Pachyderm Forest project, and opposing Councilmember Cardenas' Motions 08-2850 and 08-2849 to stop construction of the project and create a separate elephant "sanctuary" somewhere in the San Fernando Valley, and urging the City Council and the Mayor to do the same.

\*A recent study done only in European zoos came to a different conclusion, but that study should be disregarded as such zoos are not governed by the strict AZA standards with which American zoos must comply. That would be like comparing American justice standards such as right to a fair trial, right to representation, right against unlawful search and seizure, etc., with such standards in China, France, Turkey, or any other country.